

*** NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA ***

*** Number 50: Anti-Spam Resources (98% Rant Free) ***

I decided months ago not to write an issue of NetAnswers Internet Extra about spam. For a lot of reasons: first, just thinking about all those unsolicited messages advertising make-money-fast schemes and thigh cream, wasting my time, makes me cranky. Second, I've already read some wonderful articles about dealing with spam and don't think I can top them. Finally, if I did sit down and say everything that needs to be said about spam, it wouldn't be a tight little article, it would be a book.

And then, someone did write a book about stopping spam. It's called (surprisingly enough) Stopping Spam, it's published by O'Reilly and Associates, and it has a pig on the cover. It's a great book: informative, useful, and short enough to be completed during two hot bubble baths.

Now the pressure's off. Instead of ranting on and on about the evils of spam and what to do about it, I'm just going to point to three great anti-spam resources I've discovered: the book, an article, and a web site. Useful information for you, minimal ranting from me. We all win.

First, the book. Stopping Spam is for anyone who's had it up to here with bulk mail, whether you're a wet-behind-the-ears newbie or a seasoned system administrator. The first chapter answers two questions: what's spam and what's the problem? It does an admirable job of showing why bulk e-mail and newsgroup postings are much more than a minor nuisance. The next chapter covers the history of spam. It's really quite interesting, delving into the earliest uses of bulk e-mail, the people who send it and the people who try to stop them. Next up is the world of spamming today, including spammers-for-hire, multi-level marketers, pornographers and other forms of pond scum.

After a section on Internet basics comes the heart of the book: chapters for end-users on dealing with e-mail and Usenet spam. It tells how to keep e-mail address away from spammers, filter spam before you ever see it, and how to respond to the junk mail you do get. There's also a chapter for system administrators on stopping spam -- if you don't work for an ISP, you can skip it and get out of the bath before the water gets too cold.

You can get info about the book at <http://stopspam.oreilly.com>. Want it? Thanks to the wonder of online commerce, you can order it: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=156592388X/theunofficiinterA/>

Next, an article. When you get spammed, the easiest thing to do is just delete the message and get on with your life. (Whatever you do, don't make spamming worthwhile by buying whatever the spammer is trying to sell.) Just deleting those messages is quick and painless -- but if people don't complain, spammers will believe that we don't mind when they waste our time. So, when I receive spam, I use e-mail to complain about it. (It takes a minute or two, but it's so gratifying when the spammer's ISP writes back to say their account has been terminated.)

The problem is, just replying to the spam message is rarely effective -- you need to decrypt the headers of the message in order to find out who to complain to: the spammer's Internet service provider. That can be a bit of a challenge. TidBITS

newsletter published a thorough article called "Responding to Spam" -- read it and you'll know how to find out where the spammer comes from and make your complaint heard. The article is on the web at <http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tbart=05032>

Finally, the web site. If I was going to recommend the single best web site for people who hate spam (and I am!), I'd recommend <http://spam.abuse.net>. This site offers copious information on why spam is a bad thing and how to deal with it. Start with the FAQ, which answers questions like "Is spam legal?" and "Isn't spam protected by free speech laws?" Another page offers information on legal efforts to outlaw spam. The site also offers a unique tool for helping you complain to the right people when you do receive spam (at <http://abuse.net>).

There you have it: now you've got access to some fine anti-spam resources, and I barely ranted at all. Whew.

=*=*= SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE =*=*=

Stopping Spam: <http://stopspam.oreilly.com>
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=156592388X/theunofficiinterA/>

Responding to Spam article: <http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tbart=05032>

Fight Spam on the Internet!: <http://spam.abuse.net>

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The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet New Users Forum (GO INETNEW) in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to savetz@compuserve.com (74774,2725).

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